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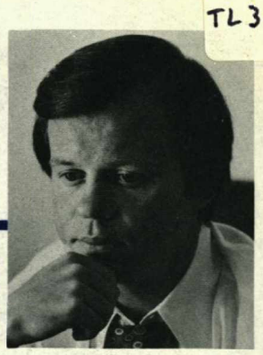
NEWS

CONGRESSMAN Tony Hall



1009 Longworth House
Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6465

ASSOCIAÇÃO DE AMIZADE
PORTUGAL — TIMOR L E
R. Pinheiro Chagas, 77-2.º E.
1000 LISBOA - PORTUGAL

District Office: 501 Federal Building
200 West Second Street
Dayton, Ohio 45402
(513) 225-2843

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Contact: Michael Gessel
(202) 225-6465

For Immediate Release:

TRAGIC SITUATION IN TIMOR FOCUS OF NEW CONGRESSIONAL PUSH FOR HUMAN AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

WASHINGTON--Two former Peace Corps volunteers now serving in Congress called for an about-face of U.S. policy towards East Timor, a largely Catholic former Portuguese island territory off the coast of northeastern Australia, where many tens of thousands have died since a 1975 invasion by Indonesia.

Rep. Tony P. Hall (D-Ohio) today will introduce a resolution calling on the Administration to work for the withdrawal of Indonesian troops from East Timor and for the establishment of the internationally-recognized right of self-determinination by the East Timorese. The resolution aims at relieving the ongoing suffering and political strife as a result of the Indonesian invasion.

An identifical resolution will be introduced in the Senate by Senator Paul E. Tsongas (D-Mass.).

In remarks on the floor of the House, Hall compared the Indonesian takeover to the recent invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentina, and suggested that the Administration seek "creative diplomatic initiatives," including the use of intermediaries to bring about a diplomatic solution to the Timor tragedy.

"It is time for the Congress to call upon the Administration to encourage the Indonesians to lift the khaki curtain they have dropped on East Timor," Hall said.

The resolution urges free access to East Timor by journalists, relief organizations, and international human rights groups. It also calls on the Indonesian government to assist with the reunification of families separated since the invasion. It is the first measure in the 97th Congress concerning East Timor.

Hall charged that the policies pursued by the Indonesian invaders have "helped to create a catastrophic famine that proportionally was among the worst in this century" and expressed fear that many more could die unless steps were taken to prevent a new military offensive by Indonesian troops.

In 1980, Hall succussfully introduced an amendment expressing the sense of Congress that the President should take steps to relieve the plight of the East Timorese. However, Hall said that the Administration has failed to implement the measure.

The U.S. has generally accepted the annexation of East Timor in order to maintain friendly relations with Indonesia. Since 1975, the United Nations General Assembly has passed resolutions each year calling for self-determination and a change in the political status of East Timor. The U.S. has either abstained or opposed the resolutions.

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